

Dear Chair Prusak and the House Committee on Health Care,

My name is Melanie Kebler and I am a Bend City Councilor. I am joined in this letter by Deschutes County Commissioner Phil Chang. We are both testifying in our individual capacities in strong support of HB 2510.

We believe the need is urgent in Oregon for common sense secure gun storage legislation because it will save lives in Deschutes County. According to a county suicide data report, between 2000 and 2017, 534 people died by suicide in our county. Half of those people used a firearm to take their own lives. Also during this period, the youth suicide rate in Deschutes County nearly doubled. This is a very serious and very real problem for our county and all of Oregon, exacerbated by the stress every Oregonian is feeling due to the pandemic. Though increased mental health and suicide prevention services can help, it is also true that most suicide deaths can be avoided if people do not have an easy way to act on suicidal impulses during their most vulnerable moments. A gun safe or a trigger lock can mean the difference between life and death for a teen who knows where his parents keep a gun. HB 2510 will increase secure storage of guns in Deschutes County and will prevent people from completing their often brief and impulsive suicidal ideations, giving them time to seek help and support for their mental health.

HB 2510 will also decrease the tragic incidences of children accessing unsecured guns and hurting or killing themselves or others. Just last winter, an 8-year-old girl was seriously injured inside a Redmond home due to an unsecured gun. https://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/redmond-child-shot-in-home-by-younger-sibling-gun-owner-arrested-for-child-neglect/article_c7d1957e-1fb4-11eb-ad76-33b728cdde1f.html . Despite parents putting guns in a cupboard, or in a closet, or under a bed, kids are curious and kids will find out where the family's guns are stored. If those guns are not secured, a tragic loss of life can occur. If the guns are secured, everyone in the home is safer. One study found that households that locked both guns and ammunition were associated with a 78 percent lower risk of self-inflicted firearm injuries and an 85 percent lower risk of unintentional firearm injuries among children, compared to those that locked neither.

Other states, including California, Connecticut, and Massachusetts have taken legislative steps to require secure gun storage. It's time for Oregon to join them. HB 2510 will save lives in Deschutes County. We urge you to support this bill and pass it out of committee.

Sincerely,



Melanie Kebler
Bend City Councilor



Phil Chang
Deschutes County Commissioner